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SUBJECT: GOI COALITION DIVIDED ON INTRODUCTION OF AG BIOTECH PRODUCTS INTO EU MARKET

REF: A. STATE 158225

B. STATE 153542

¶11. (U) Summary. EconCouns delivered our demarches regarding the lack of progress in the introduction of agricultural biotech products into the EU market to Amadeo Teti, Ministry of Trade Director General for International Trade Agreements. Teti noted Trade Minister Enmma Bonino supports the introduction of agricultural biotech products into the Italian market. Teti said the proposal made October 30 by Italian Environment Minister Pecoraro Scanio to impose a moratorium on authorizations of biotech products was made without coordination with the rest of the government. In late November, Prime Minister Prodi announced the creation of a task force comprised of the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Economic Development, Trade, and Health to formulate a GOI position on the full range of biotech issues.
End summary.

¶12. (U) In a November 23 meeting with EconCouns, Italian Director General for International Trade Amadeo Teti said the GOI accepts the WTO Dispute Settlement Body panel's September 2007 ruling on the approval and marketing of agricultural biotech products. According to Teti, the EU has made some improvements in the European Food Safety Authority's procedures for approval of agricultural biotech products. He noted the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has approved nine Agricultural biotech products in recent months, and half-joked that "this is better than a moratorium." Teti said that Trade Minister Bonino is in favor of reforming EFSA's approval process to make it consistent with the WTO ruling, adding that other Italian Ministers do not agree with Bonino's position and are working to block those changes in EFSA procedures that would speed approvals. The October 30 proposal by Environment Minister Pecoraro Scanio to impose a moratorium on agricultural biotech approvals was an example of this. Teti was adamant that Pecoraro Scanio's proposal was not cleared by the other GOI ministries with a stake in this issue, and that it does not represent GOI policy.

¶13. (U) Teti conceded that, in Italy, the issue of agricultural biotech approvals is not a trade issue, but a political one. He said that in an effort to break the political deadlock over this issue among the nine parties in the center-left coalition, Prime Minister Prodi has announced the formation of a ministerial task force to develop a GOI position on agricultural biotech products. The task force will be chaired by Prodi, and will include Agriculture Minister Paolo De Castro (Democratic Party), Environment

Minister Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio (Green Party), Minister of Economic Development Pier Luigi Bersani (Democratic Party), Trade Minister and Minister for EU Affairs Emma Bonino (Radical Party), and Health Minister Livia Turco (Democratic Party). The task force is expected to address agricultural biotech research, cultivation, and importation. Post will report on the task force's deliberations septel.

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